Fragile Lines

by fmd-jade

Summary: She had no idea what she was doing. But she knew, if roles
were reversed, she wouldn't want to be alone. Cam/Joe, sometime in
the future.

Fragile Lines

**I have no idea how they could ever get to a place where this would
be possible. But that's what fanfics are for, aren't they?**

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><p>Cameron leaned back on the Clark's couch and cradled the beer in
her hand. If someone had told her a year ago that she would live in
California and enjoy a "girl's night" with Donna, while her husband
was out, she'd have laughed him out the door.<p>

But now?

She faintly listened as Donna rummaged in the kitchen, busy with
getting them some snacks. Cameron smiled to herself, appreciating the
"housewife" side of her friend. They'd really come a long way, she
mused.

Donna strode back in and tossed Cameron a bag of chips before she
settled herself next to her. "I knew we kept them hidden from the
kids somewhere."

Cameron smirked and clinked her beer can against Donna's.

Both women looked up from their musings as the front door opened
unexpectedly and Gordon stumbled inside, as if surprised to see them
on the living room couch.

Donna was instantly on alert. "Gordon? What are you doing here? I
thought you had a group meeting." She sat up straighter.

"Uh, no." He said absent-mindedly, leaving his keys on the counter. "It fell flat."

Cameron shot Donna a quick look. Something wasâ€¦ off here.

"Why, what happened?" Donna seemed to think the same.

"Nothing, everything's fine." Gordon shrugged out of his jacket.

"Gordon?" Donna got up from the couch and didn't stop until she was facing him completely. "What's going on?"

Gordon threw Cameron a quick look, then Donna, before settling his gaze on the floor.

"Do you want me to leave?" Cameron asked cautiously and got to her feet.

"No, no, it's fine." Gordon scratched the back of his neck nervously. "Actually, I've been meaning to tell you something, Donna." He looked up at his wife with wide eyes as if making up his mind on the spot.

"I should go." Cameron quickly said. She did _not_ want to get caught up in another Clark family feud.

"No!" Gordon said shortly and held out a hand. "Stay. You... You'll hear about it anyway." He took a deep breath. "I haven't been going to group meetings for a while now."

He looked at Donna expectantly and waited for her reaction. He was not disappointed.

"What? But..." Donna was at a loss for words. "But where do you go? I mean, I feel like you've been doing better."

Gordon nodded. "And I have!" He tried to soothe his wife. "I justâ€¦" He trailed off, before suddenly seeming to find the courage to confess everything. "I hate group meetings. They make me feel like an idiot."

Donna shot a quick look at Cameron behind her, but the young woman didn't know how any of this was her concern. She turned to face Gordon again. "But then where do you go each week?" She wanted to know.

Gordon swallowed audibly. "I'm meeting a friend." He shot Cameron a nervous look but just as soon evaded her gaze.

Donna frowned. "A friend? Who do you know here, who-"

"It's Joe." Cameron interrupted Donna, coming to the right conclusion a lot sooner. "It's Joe, isn't it? And what? He doesn't make you feel like an idiot?" She felt her temper rising.

"Joe MacMillan? He doesn't have any friends!" Donna exclaimed. Her look darted once more from her husband to Cameron and back.

Gordon shook his head. "Stop, both of you!" He took a deep breath to calm himself down. "Yes, I'm meeting Joe. And it's actually helping me, so deal with it."

"He stole your software!" Donna argued. "How can you claim to be friends with him when he went behind your back ONCE AGAIN!"

But Gordon wouldn't let himself be deterred. "I gave it to him!" He shot back. "_I_ did! Not you!" He pointed a finger at his wife, then at Cameron. "Or you! Yes, he built his firm out of it but you know what?! I don't care!" He held his hands wide open, as if he truly didn't. "He didn't deserve what you two did to him, so I tried to help him. I have brain damage for God's sake, who cares about the stupid software, about any of this!"

Donna flinched, as she always did when Gordon reminded them that everything was in fact _not okay_, that he was slowly but surely getting worse. She bit her lip to keep herself from lashing out at him in return.

"So what happened tonight?" Cameron asked as calmly as possible in the ensuing silence.

Gordon met her gaze composedly. "He didn't show up." He confessed dejectedly. "He wasn't home so I called his office and they told meâ€¦ " His gaze darted from one woman to the other, as if gauging their reactions. "They told me that his father died."

"What?"

"So?" Cameron and Donna said at the same time.

Cameron staggered backwards until she hit the sofa and sank down. Her hands covered her mouth while her eyes darted over the carpet. Donna frowned at her friend's obvious distress.

"I just..." Gordon shrugged. "I have half a mind to go to New York. The funeral is tomorrow."

Donna looked at him sharply. "You'll do no such thing!"

"What? Why not? He doesn't have anyone!"

"I don't care. You're not going." She said with finality.

"Donna, he's my friend!" He said pointedly.

"I have to leave." Cameron interrupted their argument. She got up and walked over towards the door, avoiding both of their gazes, and slipped into her jacket.

"Cameron!" Donna followed her to the door. "You're not doing what I think you're doing, right?"

Cameron looked at her, then at Gordon and held his gaze. He gave her a small nod and a grateful smile.

"I have to leave." Was all she said, with more conviction this time.

Donna's hand snapped forward and held on to her wrist.
"Wait."

"Donna, I-"

"No." Donna cut in sharply. "Just wait one minute." Then she left
down the hall. Cameron threw Gordon a confused look, but he looked as
puzzled as she did.

It really only took a moment until Donna returned, thrusting a black
blouse and blazer into Cameron's hands. "I can't believe I'm doing
this, but here, take this. You'll need it."

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"Thanks for driving me to the airport, Bos."

John's eyes narrowed and he shot her a quick look where she sat in
the passenger seat, but she kept looking out into the dead of the
night. "Yeah, it's alright." He relented. "Not as if any of the other
kids has a car."

Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw her share his small smirk. It
was at least something.

"When was the last time you talked to him?" He asked.

Cameron's jaw clenched as she thought of the answer. "You mean the
last time we had a fight?" Cameron shrugged. "A few weeks
ago."

"Well." Bosworth heaved a deep breath. "I think it's a decent thing
you're trying to do for him."

She didn't say anything to that, but she relaxed slightly.

He stopped the car at the drop off point in front of the main
terminal. Cameron shot him a small smile, thanked him again and
reached for the door.

"Cameron." He gently held on to her wrist before she could open
it.

She turned to face him impatiently.

"I just hope you know what you're getting yourself into." He said
carefully.

Cameron snorted. "Trust me, if anyone knows, it's me."

"No." Bosworth said in a more serious tone. "I just want you to be
careful. Someone once told me that Joe MacMillan was damaged goods,
and I agree." He couldn't stop himself from continuing. "Did you know
that he was presumed missing for a whole year before he showed up at
Cardiff Electric?! And from what you told me he vanished again after
burning a truckload of computers. Something's just-"

"Bos." She looked away for a moment, her face slightly less tense

when she looked back. "It's okay."

He wasn't missing, he was searching for his mother, not that she
would tell Bosworth. And in a way, she thought, he was still looking
for her. Only this time, he hoped if he made big enough waves, she'd
be the one to find him.

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Apart from the memorial service for her father Cameron had never been
at a funeral. And even that she barely remembered. All she remembered
was her anger, that they didn't even have a body to bury. The cab
dropped her right at the cemetery and she nervously pulled at the hem
of the black blazer as she stepped out. The blouse was one thing, but
the jacket was seriously uncomfortable.

Or maybe it was this whole situation that made her feel so out of
place.

She hoisted up her bag and started walking. Cameron didn't have to
look far to find the funeral, the sea of black clad people a short
distance away was as good as a neon sign. She had no clue what she
wanted to do once she was actually there, but she'd never been one to
rely on the help of others and decided she'd figure it out once she
got there. It's how she'd lived life so far anyway.

The service had already started when Cameron reached the edge of the
crowd. A few people around her turned in her direction, obviously
perturbed that someone would arrive late for a funeral, and some eyes
stayed with her for a moment, clearly assessing the sight of her
among the well dressed congregation.

Seriously, was there anyone left working at IBM today? She thought to
herself, trying to ignore the eyes on her.

She spotted Joe instantly where he stood alone off to the side of the
casket. It wasn't just that due to his height he stood out among the
rest, it was this weird connection she swore she felt whenever he was
near.

The priest was busy praising the deceased for all his accomplishments
in life and Cameron had to keep herself from rolling her eyes. She
doubted Joe counted himself among those accomplishments, the way his
eyes kept stubbornly staring at the ground. Maybe his father hadn't
either.

He didn't look good. His black suit was impeccable of course and she
doubted anyone around her could spot it, but he was... off. Crumbling
at the edges. His posture was too rigid, the set of his shoulders too
tense, his face set in a permanent scowl.

She craned her neck to get a better look at him when someone else
walked to the front to talk about the deceased. When he introduced
himself as a long-time friend of the family, Cameron couldn't help
but chuckle mirthlessly, drawing the eyes of various
bystanders.

"What?" She snapped at a woman eyeing her disdainfully. Her eyes spun

towards the front again. Cameron sighed. Maybe coming here had been a mistake. The suit in the front kept droning on, but Cameron kept her gaze trained on Joe.

A quick wipe over his cheek was the only concession he made to his feelings. It was enough for her.

Cameron dropped her trusted military bag where she stood and walked up to the front, well aware of everyone's eyes on her.

Everyone's but Joe's.

He was still stubbornly staring at the ground, as if he could stare it into submission and only looked up when she was right beside him, close enough for their shoulders to touch. His head whipped around to her and his eyes narrowed.

"What are you doing here?" He asked under his breath.

Cameron wouldn't meet his gaze and kept her focus on the flowers arranged around the casket. "Shut up." Was all she whispered.

Joe's eyes were burning into the side of her head as her hand, hanging lose at her side, searched for his and she intertwined her fingers with his own. He turned his head forward again, his scowl back in place, but not before returning her tight hold with a squeeze of his own.

Cameron feared that he would let go now, but held on to her hand, grasping it as if his life depended on it.

Good. She wasn't willing to let go either.

End
file.